

## SOCIAL SYMPATHY.

A poet who lived in the reign of Elizabeth, and who knew more about education than all the Professors in Germany, said that the object of the book which he wrote upon the subject was "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline." And most people, when they reflect seriously what they want their children to learn at school and at home, would agree with him, that, though intellectual training is good, it is not nearly so important as moral training, or what he calls "vertuous and gentle discipline." But while it is easy to say that children should be brought up as ladies and gentlemen, it is hard to carry the precept into practice; and since it is less difficult to realize what a thing is not, than to realize what it is, people have come to think of a gentleman as a person who has not got certain habits of speech or behaviour which belong to other classes, and to regard education as the great separator, instead of seeing that gentlemanliness is not a negative quality, but the virtue of standing in a particularly active and positive relation to other human beings, and that education is in reality the great uniter. In other words, to be a lady or a gentleman is not merely to possess certain pleasing external attributes of manner, nor even attractive intellectual accomplishments like talking French and playing the piano, but to have the power of entering other people's minds and getting the best out of them. And the aim of education should be to cultivate this power of sympathy by encouraging children to take an interest in the lives and doings of others whose circumstances are unlike, and perhaps less fortunate than, their own. Unhappily, this is hardly done at all at Boarding Schools. Owing to our mixed system of public and private secondary education, the sifting out of children into different classes which never meet, begins in England much earlier than in countries like France and Germany. The boys and girls of well-to-do parents go to expensive schools, where, forgetting that they are exceptionally privileged, they learn to talk with coldness or contempt of other children who have never had the same advantages as themselves. The author of a clever book on a Boys' Public School, which appeared a year or two ago, described how the master of the school encouraged the boys to support

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a Mission in a large town, from which a party of children came down to visit the school playground once a year. I remember the boys' comments, because they were almost word for word what we used to say, and I think the author of the book must have heard the words actually used to describe the party's send off: "We gave them a feed, and the little beggars were jolly thankful, as they jolly well ought to be, and so they hooked it back to their slums."

But when children are being taught at home, before they go to school, it ought to be possible to accustom them to be sympathetic towards the children of the poorer classes, and not to regard them like strange animals, with a mixture of amusement and contempt. And to do so is the duty of their parents and teachers. No one who had charge of a child would allow it to hear slighting words of a person with (say) some tiresome physical infirmity, like deafness or lameness, or a humpback: on the contrary, he or she would insist on the child's treating such persons with special courtesy and respect, and would be careful to point out that one of the uses of being strong is to help people who are weak. The same rule should be applied when the conversion turns upon poverty, or when children are brought into contact with it. They should be encouraged to regard it, and the signs of it, unpleasant though they may be, with sympathy; and to recognise that the poor are their brothers and sisters to whom they owe a special obligation of goodwill without patronage. It is not hard to encourage this attitude: the only real difficulty is that those who teach children have got to believe it themselves, and to show that they believe it by their own behaviour. If they do this, there are plenty of opportunities, both in lessons and walks, at all times, for encouraging the same feeling in children, and for teaching them to be courteous to everybody, whatever his social position may be. For instance, all boys are naturally patriotic, and like hearing about struggles in great causes and amid great difficulties. English history is particularly rich in examples of men who have given up their lives in trying to improve the social condition of their countrymen, or those for whom their countrymen were responsible.

The story of Lord Ashley and the children in coal mines and factories; of Wilberforce and the slaves; of Owen and his schools at New Lanark, of Dolling and his life in London,



might be told in a simple and interesting way as tales of heroic men. Boys might absorb these as they would absorb stories of battles. Again, there are in nearly all towns various institutions for helping the children of the poorer classes to get more pleasure out of life. In London there is the Happy Evenings Association, the Children's Country Holiday Fund (18, Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C.), and a host of others. Many children, at the age when the money box craze has smitten them like an epidemic, save and collect money to send to these, and their interest gives an opportunity of explaining what such institutions do, the lives of the children who benefit by them, and why it is better to give pennies to them than to give them to a beggar in the street. Moreover, it is very sad how little the children of the upper classes know about the public buildings of the towns in which they live—the elementary schools and whom they educate, the public museums and art galleries, the town hall and guardians' offices, the parks that are "lungs of cities." Of course, children can't understand the detach of these things which are usually very dull. But one can arouse their curiosity, and make them feel that they are members of a community having a common life and common interests with the children who pour out from those monsters of red ugliness, the public schools, and the tired men and women on the benches in the parks.

These are one or two of the ways in which teachers could develop in children habits of social sympathy and brotherliness: others they will easily find for themselves.

### POETRY CLUB NOTES.

*October 4th.*—After a short life of Mrs. Browning we read "The Cry of the Children," some of her shorter poems, and passages from "Aurora Leigh," which we much enjoyed.

Mrs. Browning was chosen for last term, but the last meeting was postponed.

The poets chosen for this term are D. G. Rossitti, Matthew Arnold, W. E. Henley, and Walt Whitman.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

DEAR EDITOR,

I wonder if any of the students know of the Holiday Courses held abroad every summer, at different centres, in connection with the Teachers' Guild.

One need not necessarily be a member of the Guild to join the Course, and a most delightful holiday, combining work and play, may be spent at a moderate cost. The first one I attended was at Honfleur, in Normandy, which is a delightful cycling district, and from where we cycled to Rouen, Caen, and other places of interest.

The following year I went to Tours, the centre of Touraine, and where the purest French is supposed to be spoken, and where we certainly made great strides in the language. The course lasts from three weeks to a month. Lectures and conversation classes are held in the morning, and the afternoons are devoted to excursions, &c.

Not more than two or three students board in the same family, so that one has the extra advantage of being obliged to speak French; and the French people lay themselves out to make the English comfortable in every way.

I shall be very pleased to give anyone fuller particulars if they would care for them.

Yours sincerely,

G. F.

c/o L. F. S. HORE, Esq.,

SANDY BAY,

HOBART,

TASMANIA,

*July 22nd, 1907.*

It is almost impossible to describe the Bush in Tasmania, and yet I should like to give you some idea of how lovely it is. Almost all the trees are gums—blue gums, peppermint gums, stringy bark, and so many more that I have not yet learned the names of. For miles and miles you see nothing but gum trees, while here and there rise up huge white trunks, with long, white arms out-stretched. These are ring barked, or dead trees; they give a weird look to the whole Bush, and in the twilight look like spectres.

It is in the early morning and the evening that the Bush looks its best. I go for a walk and often ride in the Bush